

What is Archaeology?

Archaeology is the study of ancient history through material remains. Archaeologists use excavation followed by analysis to understand past human societies and how they changed over time.

Such research is important because the majority of the human past is not recorded by written history. This is especially the case in cultures with oral traditions, including Samoa and other parts of the Pacific. Through archaeology it is possible to reconstruct aspects of human society, such as past human diets, housing and lifestyles, giving us insight into the differences and similarities within human history, the present and the future.

The National Park Service of America regularly conducts archaeological research within the park boundaries. This work is carried out in conjunction with local communities, who donate time as well as valuable knowledge of local history. The results of this research are on display at the National Park Center in Pago Pago.

“ Give a basic understanding of the traditional Samoan culture of some 3000 years” - National Park General Management Plan, 1997

Grinding stone or foaga at Saua site. Photo by Epi Suafo'a-Taua'i



Samoan History

Samoa was settled around 3500 years ago, during the Lapita expansion. The Lapita people are thought to have originated from SE Asia, bringing with them language, material culture and ideas as they voyaged across the Pacific. This cultural complex is widely recognized by its distinct dentate-stamped pottery, from which the name Lapita derives. The various crops (such as taro and breadfruit) and animals (pigs, dogs and chickens) that the Lapita people brought to Samoa formed the basis of Samoan culture.

The islands of Samoa, Tonga and Fiji make up the area of Western Polynesian, the homeland of Polynesian culture. However, each island group has developed its own unique culture despite continued interaction and migration between the islands.

The most significant archaeology sites in American Samoa consist of star mounds, adze quarries, habitation areas and grave sites. Terraces are also common modifications on the landscape, and stone tools have been found in various locations and numbers around the islands.



Archaeologists working at the Lower Sa'uma Ridge. Photo by Esaia Fa'a'aita

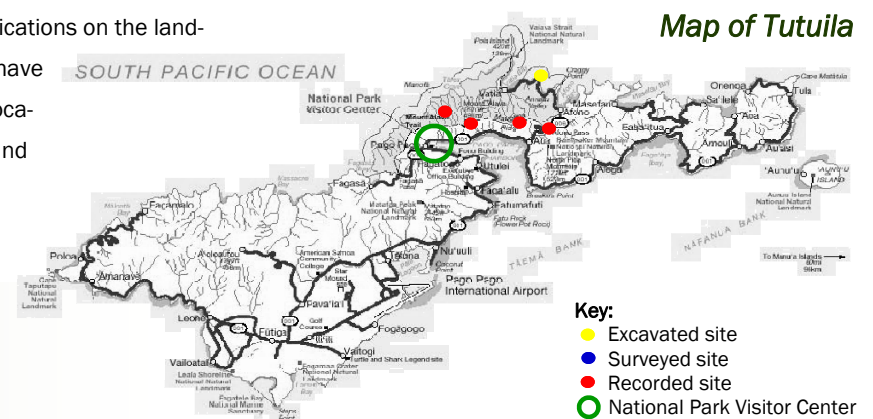
Sites on Tutuila

Archaeological sites in the National Park

As the largest and most populous island in American Samoa, there are numerous archaeological sites on Tutuila. The most significant sites within the national park boundaries are located along the Vatia Powerline trail, which runs from Mount Alava down to Vatia village on the northern coast of Tutuila. Surveyed sites within this area include: Upper Sauma Ridge, Lower Sauma Ridge, Siufaga Ridge, Mount Alava Ridge, Maugaloa Ridge and Tiatauala Ridge. Several sites have been located but not yet fully surveyed. These include: Olo Ridge, Faiga Ridge and Magaotula Ridge.

Lower Sauma Ridge and the Vatia Powerline Trail have been archaeologically excavated. Eleven features were discovered on three terraces descending towards the ocean, with stone tools discovered in the vicinity. Several of the other sites have been surveyed to allow for future archaeological work if required.

Map of Tutuila



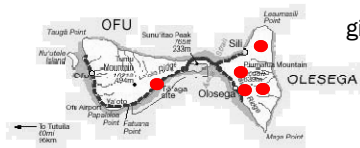
Archaeology in American Samoa

Archaeology on Manu'a Islands

The beautiful Manu'a Islands hold much significance in Samoan history. The three island chain consists of:

Ofu & Olosega

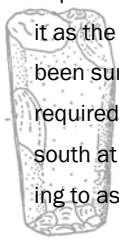
These two islands have several archaeological sites that have been found and recorded, but have not yet been surveyed to assess their full potential. Joined today by a short road bridge, the proximity of the two islands has led them to be commonly grouped together throughout history. On the island of Olosega the records consist of mountain sites from Maga point up to Piumafua. The island of Ofu has park boundaries which are located on a four-mile stretch of coast. But sites have been found inland, and further studied by archaeologists such as Kirch and



Hunt on their To'aga Report.

Ta'u

Ta'u is believed to be the birth place of the god Tagaloa, and was the island of residence for the Samoan high chief or matai until American government was established in 1904. The village site of Saua is important because oral history describes it as the site of the first 'ava ceremony. It has been surveyed, but has yet to be excavated if required. Several other sites have been found further south at Luama'a, Vaito'a and Si'u, but require surveying to assess their sustainability.



Future Research

The National Park of American Samoa was established in 1993, in order to preserve the stunning natural environment of the American Samoa archipelago. The creation of the 50th National

Park was made possible by working closely with Samoan chiefs and villages, who leased the current park land to the National Park Service under 50 year leases. It is through this service

that both the natural and cultural resources of Samoa can be protected and integrated into local Samoan life.

There are still many sites throughout the park yet to have their rich treasures discovered. Although some research has been done, there is always more to undertake in order to provide understanding of the profound culture and heritage of American Samoa. The initiatives for the future by the Park Service include: wayside exhibits, increased village/community involvement and education to encourage protection and appreciation of Samoa's precious history for further generations to enjoy.



Aerial view of Tutuila, showing the geography of the National Park. Photo by Michael Tennant.

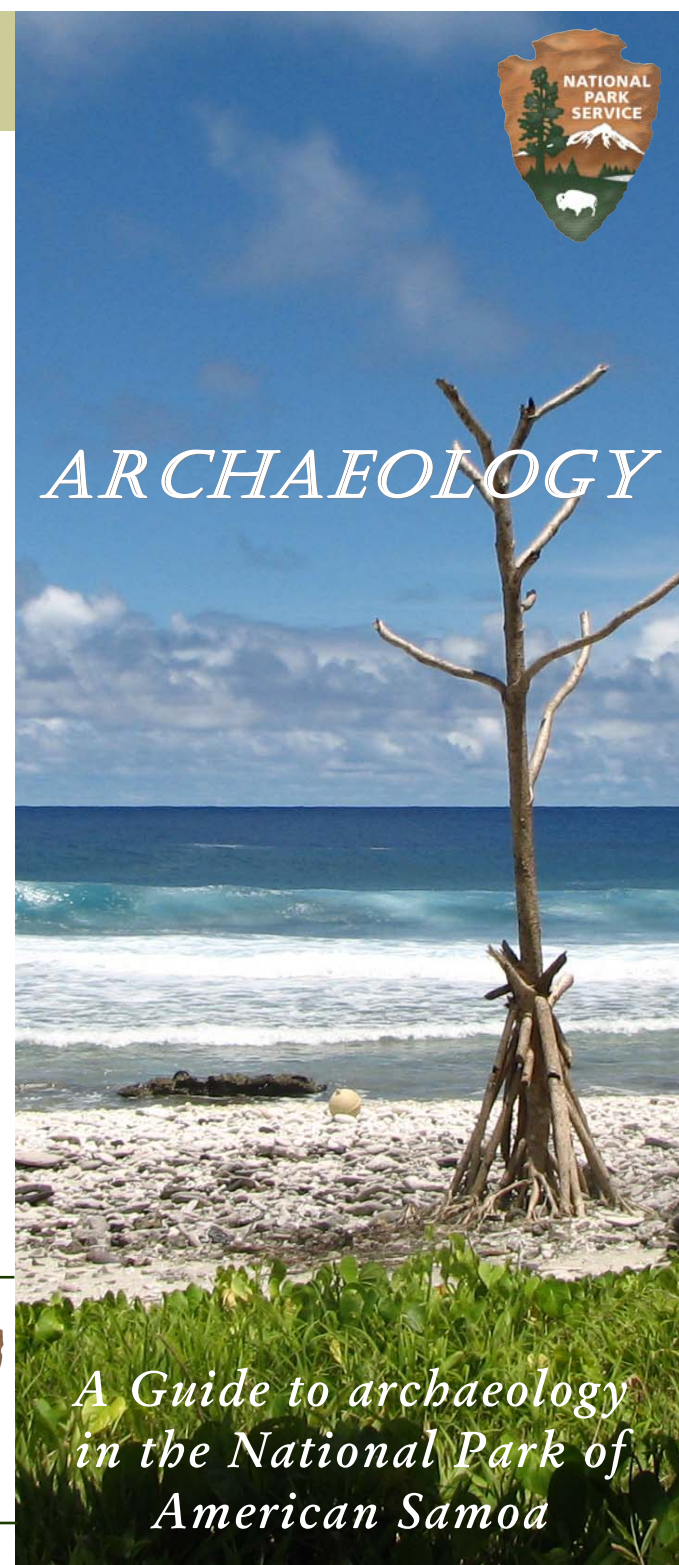
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Sites in Manu'a

ARCHAEOLOGY



*A Guide to archaeology
in the National Park of
American Samoa*